

The Place of Society and Societal Issues in the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia: A Content Analysis

Mulugeta Yayah Worku^{a1}, Solomon Melesse Mengistie, Alemayehu Bishaw Tamiru^a

^aDepartment of Teacher Education & Curriculum Studies, College of Education and Behavioral sciences, Bahir Dar University

Abstract: Using the Social Reconstructionist educational philosophy as a theoretical framework, this study attempts to understand the place of society and major societal issues in the current Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia. To achieve this purpose, an analysis was made both on the manifest and latent contents of the whole policy document. The analysis revealed that in the present Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia, words, concepts, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that reflect basic ideas of the Social Reconstructionist educational philosophy were not satisfactorily incorporated. Besides, though some society-related concepts were explored, contents dealing with sensitive social, economic, and political problems were not adequately included. Based on the above findings, therefore, it is concluded that the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia has not satisfactorily echoed society and major societal issues, particularly those that are given much emphasis in the Social Reconstructionist educational philosophy. Hence, towards the end of the article areas of intervention that could possibly ameliorate this problem are highlighted.

Keywords: Education & training policy; Ethiopia; social justice; societal issues; society; Social reconstructionism

INTRODUCTION

Since the ancient time, education has been recognized as an important means of combating diverse societal problems. Due to this, an inextricable relationship has been developed between education and society (Taba, 1962). Particularly in modern times, educators, policymakers, and citizens unanimously believe that social development, particularly sustainable development, is unthinkable without a well-developed and high quality national educational system (Ellis, 2004; Counts, 1932; Dewey, 1916).

According to Taba (1962), the idea of education as a social process, and the contention that education is the best approach of social reconstruction came with the works of John Dewey (1859-1952) and his followers. According to Dewey (cited in Taba, 1962), schools have two major functions: *individual development of the learner* and *social reconstruction*. However, some of his followers, i.e., late progressive educators, became much more interested in the first function of education to the neglect of the latter. This overemphasis on individual development, according to many social reconstructionists (e.g., Counts, 1932), was the major

¹ Corresponding author: gashu65@gmail.com

reason for the inability of the American education system to rescue the country from the societal problems that reigned in the 1930s. Hence, as of the 1930s, particularly after the *Great Depression*², a significant number of progressive educators began to abandon progressivism in favor of social reconstructionism (Hill, 2006; Ellis, 2004; Taba, 1962). George Counts, William Kilpatrick, and Harold Rugg, according to McNeil (1996) and Hill (2006), were good examples in this regard.

Many scholars, particularly critical curriculum educators, believe that modern educational systems instead of striving for social transformation and social justice are perpetuating the status quo which is characterized, in many societies, by unequal and unjust socio-economic and political relations (Hills, 2006; Apple, 1990; Friere, 1970). It seems due to these limitations of modern education that many contemporary societies, instead of entertaining the perceived benefits of education, are besieged with numerous societal challenges. The following statements that are taken from Quisumbing could best describe contemporary societies and societal problems across the globe:

We are witnessing breakthroughs in the different fields of science and technology, yet at the same time, never before have we seen human suffering in such a magnitude, injustice, inequity, poverty, and such sophisticated forms of violence and war, torture and abuse, weapons of mass destruction, intolerance and discrimination, such escalating degradation of the environment, threats to the planet Earth, the breakdown of human, ethical and spiritual values, the crisis of confidence, the loss of hope (Quisumbing, 2002, p., 1).

From the preceding discussion, therefore, it is not difficult to understand that despite the deep faith societies have on education in solving diverse societal problems, many countries today are besieged with lots of problems: social, economic, political, environmental, and the like. For some educators (e.g., Counts, 1932; Brameld, 1971; Ellis, 2004; Hill, 2005; McNeil, 1996; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004; Schiro, 2013), these societal problems emanate partly from the failure of national education policies to give attention for society and societal issues. For these scholars, rethinking the purpose of education is vital, if educational institutions and their educators are to meaningfully discharge their social and professional responsibilities. Hence, this general education scene and concern of educators on society and societal issues were some of the reasons to think over this study. Dearth of adequate study on the place of society and societal issues in the educational system of many countries, including Ethiopia, was also another reason to conduct this study. As of the researchers' best knowledge, a full-fledged research aimed at exploring the place of society and societal issues in the education system of Ethiopia has not been conducted yet.

This study, therefore, aimed at examining society and societal issues in the current Education and Training Policy (hereafter ETP) of Ethiopia through a thorough analysis of its national policy document. For this purpose, the present study is organized under the following

² It was a historical period in the USA, from 1929-1933, characterized by unprecedented economic and social crises.

research questions: To what extent do *manifest contents* of the Ethiopian ETP reflect society and societal issues? To what extent do *latent contents* of the Ethiopian ETP reflect society and societal issues?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study has tried to analyze the place of society and societal issues in the Ethiopian ETP. For this purpose, the study employs the Social Reconstructionist educational philosophy as its theoretical framework. This is because; the philosophy, as compared with other philosophies and educational theories, has well-developed assumptions, principles, and theories concerning the role of education vis-à-vis society, societal problems, and social reconstruction.

Proponents of social reconstructionism unanimously contend that schools and educators should always be concerned with society and its problems. They prioritize the notion of *social responsibility* in their discussions concerning education, educational institutions, and teachers (Brameld, 1971; Counts, 1932; Ellis, 2004; Hill, 2006; Schiro, 2013). By focusing on the social problems of contemporary societies, social reconstruction educational philosophers strongly contend that reconstruction and transformation of societies should be the central function of education, educational institutions, and teachers (Dewey, 1916; Counts, 1932).

Generally, social reconstructionist educators assert that contemporary societies are besieged by unprecedented societal problems. Hence, they argue that society, societal issues, and social reform should be at the forefront of any educational agenda. For social reconstructionist educators, educational institutions should always strive to help students understand these societal problems so that they will later become major actors of the social reconstruction process (Ellis, 2004; Hill, 2006; Schiro, 2013). Social reconstructionists also firmly believe that the best approach for social cohesion, change, and transformation is education³, of course, society-centered education. If educational policies and practices give due attention to society, societal issues, social justice, and social reform, with appropriate curricula, pedagogy, and competent teachers having the spirit of society, social reconstructionists contend, better societies that could benefit all members of a society, on the basis of equality and equity, can be established (Ellis, 2004; Hill, 2006; McNeil, 1996 Schiro, 2013).

Social reconstructionist educators (also reconceptualists, internationalists, and futurists) advocate the need to emphasize such issues as cultural pluralism, equality, and futurism in the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). They also recommend a curriculum that emphasizes sensitive global issues as part of the larger social order. In this regard, they maintain that understanding of other nations and their cultures is of paramount significance. For this

³ Social reconstructionists do not advocate the use of force. They, instead, promote peaceful and democratic approaches, mainly society-centered educational, curricular, and instructional approaches.

purpose, they cherish the incorporation of an international component in the national curriculum (Brameld, 1971; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004; Rusell, 2012).

Needless to say, national educational policies, as regulators of all domestic educational affairs, play a decisive role in realizing the major purpose of education. As Maguire and Dillon (2007) convincingly showed, educational policies serve as a frame of reference for all other educational documents, strategies, and practices. It is at national educational policies that grand educational issues such as educational aims and philosophies are determined (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004; Taba, 1962). National educational policies also serve as frameworks for curriculum development, educational management, pedagogical decision making, and many other related issues (Maguire & Dillon, 2007).

Taking into consideration of the above ideas, the present study attempts to investigate the state of society and societal issues in the ETP of Ethiopia. Put differently, the present study examines the incorporation of major social reconstructionist educational ideas such as society in general and the Ethiopian society in particular, societal problems, society-centered educational purposes, democracy, social justice, and contemporary global issues in the country's national education policy document.

METHODOLOGY

Understanding the place of society and its problems with emphasis to the current ETP of Ethiopia was the major purpose of this study. To achieve this purpose, it was necessary to critically analyze the country's ETP. Hence, this study entirely depends on descriptive content analysis method. Content analysis, with a focus on identifying patterns in texts, is a frequently used research method in the social sciences (Krippendorff, 2004; Frankel & Wallen, 2006). Content analysis, according to Krippendorff (2004, p. 18), is a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use".

As far as sampling is concerned, the policy document was not sampled in terms of chapters or sub-chapters. Instead, all parts of the ETP were considered while conducting the analysis as it is very manageable in size. Coming to data collection, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The quantitative data, i.e., the manifest contents, were collected by computer searching. That is, different words, terms, concepts, and phrases that were essential for the study were searched by using a computer program. In this approach, data concerning the frequency of different words, concepts, phrases, and paragraphs related to society, societal issues, and social reconstructionism were collected. The qualitative data, the latent contents, which include messages and implications of different phrases, sentences, and paragraph (s), on the other hand, were collected by carefully reading the whole policy document.

In the data collection process, due attention was given to the issue of reliability. For instance, to check the reliability of the frequency of words/phrases, a PDF word count program was used. In this regard, the PDF version of the policy document was entered into a PDF advanced search program. Using this program, words and phrases essential for the study were

searched and counted. This task was repeated three times. As a result of this, quite similar results were obtained.

Finally, this study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. To analyze the quantitative data, descriptive statistics, mainly frequency count was used. It was used to easily understand the number of occurrences of different words, terms, and concepts related to society, societal issues, and social reconstruction. Also, qualitative data analysis methods were employed so as to analyze the meaning of the latent contents. Description, narration, and direct quotation techniques were very important in this regard.

RESULTS

In this part, the data obtained from the ETP are presented and analyzed. This task is undertaken under two major themes and nine sub-themes. The first major theme, having six sub-themes, presents findings of the manifest content analysis while the second major theme, with three sub-themes, outlines findings obtained from the latent content analysis.

Findings from Manifest Content Analysis

In order to understand the place of society and societal issues in the ETP of Ethiopia, some manifest data were collected. That is, sensitive words, concepts, and phrases that are central in social reconstructionism were identified and searched. The following sub-themes, therefore, present findings obtained in this approach.

The inclusion of major words, terms, concepts, and phrases related to society

In order to understand the inclusion of some major concepts related to society, an analysis was made on nine society-related words and terms. The data obtained in this manner is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency of major words/phrases related to society used in the ETP of Ethiopia

Words/phrases	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Society	6	0.20
Societal	5	0.16
Social	2	0.06
Socialization	0	0.00
Social cohesion	0	0.00
Social mobility	0	0.00
Social class	0	0.00
Community	1	0.03
Family	0	0.00
Total	14	0.47

Note: The total number of words used in the text of the Ethiopian ETP, including the preliminary pages, is 2962.

As it can be seen from Table 1, major words and concepts related to society were not frequently mentioned in the ETP of Ethiopia. For instance, the words society, societal, social, and community appeared only 6, 5, 2, and 1 times respectively. The remaining five concepts, i.e., socialization, social cohesion, social mobility, social class, and family were not totally mentioned. This finding, therefore, suggests that major words and concepts related to society were not adequately reflected in the ETP of Ethiopia.

Incorporation of specific concepts related to the Ethiopian society

In this study, the incorporation of some specific concepts related to the Ethiopian society was also assessed. However, as Table 2 depicts, these issues were not well-reflected in the country's ETP document.

Table2

<i>Frequency of major words and concepts related to the Ethiopian society</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Words/phrases		
Ethiopia (main text)	1	0.03
Ethiopian	0	0.00
Ethiopian constitution	0	0.00
Ethiopianization	0	0.00
Ethiopian citizen/national	0	0.00
Ethiopian culture	0	0.00
Ethiopian people(s)	0	0.00
Ethiopian society	0	0.00
Ethiopian values	0	0.00
Ethiopian youth	0	0.00
Religion	0	0.00
National history	0	0.00
National symbols	0	0.00
Total	1	0.03

Table 2 shows the state of major concepts related to the Ethiopian society in the national education policy document. As it can be seen from the same table, out of the 14 concepts, related to the Ethiopian society, 13 of them were not totally mentioned. Important terms such as Ethiopian, Ethiopian constitution, Ethiopian culture, Ethiopian society, and Ethiopian people were never used in this national policy document. To the worst, the phrase Ethiopian citizen/national, another important issue in the Ethiopian society, was also not mentioned. This could be considered as very surprising because the policy document has failed to show the very reason that it was formulated for.

Consideration of society-centered educational purposes

Education as a social process is expected to bring social change and transformation. Improving way of life is the ultimate goal of national educational policies. Therefore, by using nine words and phrases, this study has tried to assess the ETP vis-à-vis social change and other related issues. Table 3 presents the data collected in this regard.

Table 3

Frequency of concepts related to social reconstructionist educational purposes

Words/phrases	f	%
Social amelioration (improvement, betterment)	0	0.00
Social change	0	0.00
Social order (better)	0	0.00
Social reconstruction	0	0.00
Social transformation	0	0.00
Societal needs	3	0.10
Societal responsibility	1	0.03
Good society	0	0.00
Nation building	0	0.00
Total	4	0.13

From the perspectives of the society-centered educational philosophy, the ultimate goal of education, both at policy and practice levels, is social change. In social reconstructionism, terms like social amelioration, social change, better social order, social reconstruction, social transformation, and nation building are frequently used to describe the ultimate aim of education. Unfortunately, as it can be seen from Table 3, these concepts were not mentioned in Ethiopia's ETP. For instance, no one can find a single term/phrase on the central purposes of education such as social amelioration, social change, better social order, social reconstruction, social transformation, good society, and nation building. Only two phrases, i.e. societal needs and societal responsibility were used only 3 and 1 times respectively.

Consideration of societal problems

The major reason behind formulating national education policies is the desire to address diverse societal problems. Hence, educational policies are expected to show the general societal problems that they stand for. It was with this idea in mind that an attempt was made to investigate the incorporation of major societal problems in the current ETP of Ethiopia. The data gathered in this regard is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Frequency of concepts related to major societal problems

Words/phrases	f	%
Economic problems	0	0.00
Environmental problems	0	0.00
Ethiopian problems	0	0.00
Local problems	0	0.00
Political problems	0	0.00
Social crisis	0	0.00
Social/society problems	1	0.03
Total	1	0.03

As it can be seen from Table 4, one can find no words and phrases related to major societal problems. The ETP contains no any word concerning economic, environmental, political, and Ethiopian/local problems. The phrase social crisis too was not mentioned in this national policy document. Only one phrase about societal problems is mentioned. Overall, those responsible for the formulation of the Ethiopian ETP did not satisfactorily show the problems that led to its formulation and the very reasons that the policy stands for.

In addition to the major societal problems, education policies need to indicate some specific, but sensitive societal problems. Based on the literature review, 13 pervasive societal problems, particularly problems of sub-Saharan and other developing societies, were used to assess the Ethiopian ETP. Table 5 presents the data in this regard.

Table 5

Frequency of words related to specific societal problems

Words	f	%
Abuse	0	0.00
Discrimination	0	0.00
Disease	0	0.00
Drought	0	0.00
Exploitation	0	0.00
Inequity	0	0.00
Injustice	0	0.00
Intolerance	0	0.00
Oppression	0	0.00
Poverty	0	0.00
Unemployment	0	0.00
Violence	0	0.00
War	0	0.00
Total	0	0.00

Table 5 depicts the state of some specific societal problems in the ETP of Ethiopia. As it can be seen from the same table, all of the 13 sensitive problems of many sub-Saharan African societies were not mentioned in this national policy document.

The place of concepts related to democracy and social justice

Democracy, social justice, and other related issues are at the heart of contemporary educational policies. Fostering these societal values on students, and gradually on the entire society, has become the central purpose of education in many modern societies. Therefore, using 16 words and phrases, this study has tried to assess the place of these fundamental concepts and values in the ETP of Ethiopia. Table 6 presents the data gathered in this regard.

Table 6

<i>Frequency of concepts related to democracy and social justice</i>		
Words/phrases	f	%
Democracy	0	0.00
Democratic culture	2	0.06
Democratic leadership	2	0.06
Democratic right	0	0.00
Democratic system	0	0.00
Democratic unity	1	0.03
Democratic value	2	0.06
Diversity	0	0.00
Equality	3	0.10
Equity	3	0.10
Freedom	0	0.00
Human right	2	0.06
Justice	2	0.08
Pluralism	0	0.00
Social justice	0	0.00
Tolerance	1	0.03
Total	18	0.60

As it can be seen from Table 6, some fundamental concepts and political values were not indicated in the ETP of Ethiopia. For example, the terms/phrases democratic right, democratic system, diversity, freedom, pluralism, and social justice were not completely mentioned in the policy document. Other related concepts (e.g., democratic culture, democratic leadership, democratic unity, democratic value, and tolerance) too were not adequately used as they appeared only one to three times.

Consideration of major global issues

Due to globalization and the threats of the 21st century, national educational policies have become sensitive to diverse global issues. Nowadays, social cohesion, which has long been

the major purpose of education in many countries, is not considered to be sufficient. In response to globalization, diverse global issues have embraced a central position in the education system of many countries. Bearing this idea in mind, this study has assessed the place of these sensitive issues in the ETP of Ethiopia. Table 7 presents the data collected for this purpose.

Table 7

Frequency of words and phrases related to globalization

Words or phrases	f	%
Global	0	0.00
Global citizenship	0	0.00
Globalization	0	0.00
International communication, outlook, and relations	3	0.10
International cooperation	0	0.00
International organization	0	0.00
Internationalism	0	0.00
Total	3	0.10

As clearly shown in Table 7, almost all of the concepts related to basic global issues were not incorporated in the ETP of Ethiopia. The terms/phrases global, global citizenship, globalization, international cooperation, international organization, and internationalism were not totally mentioned in this national policy document. Only the phrases international communication, international outlook, and international relations were used once each. This implies that manifest content related to global issues were not given attention in the ETP of Ethiopia.

In a related manner, this study has examined the Ethiopian ETP for its inclusion of words, concepts, and phrases related to some contemporary global issues. The data gathered in this regard is presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8

Frequency of words and phrases related to specific contemporary global problems

Words or phrases	f	%
Climate change	0	0.00
Depletion of resources	0	0.00
Desertification	0	0.00
Drought	0	0.00
Environmental degradation	0	0.00
Global threat	0	0.00
Global warming	0	0.00
Pollution	0	0.00
Terrorism	0	0.00
Total	0	0.00

The data in Table 8 reveals insensitivity of the Ethiopian ETP towards many of the major global issues that many contemporary societies are experiencing. All of the nine major contemporary global issues used in this study were not totally mentioned in the policy document. This finding, therefore, suggests that those responsible for the formulation of the policy document were less concerned with contemporary global issues.

Findings from Latent Content Analysis

This study, as already stated, also sought to analyze the latent contents of the Ethiopian ETP. To that end, a thorough analysis was made on all of its parts. Put differently, words, terms, concepts, phrases, and statements that embody message, implicitly or explicitly, on society, societal problems, society-centered education, and most importantly the major ideas and assumptions of social reconstructionism were hunted in the three major parts (introduction, objective, and strategy parts) of the policy document. Hence, following is a description of the findings obtained through the analysis of the policy's latent contents.

The introduction part of the Ethiopian ETP

Like any education policy document, the first part of the Ethiopian ETP deals with some introductory notes. Hence, this part of the policy presents the meaning of education in the Ethiopian context, describes previous educational situations, and the problems that it stands for. The introductory part of the policy also highlights directions that need to be stressed in the country's education system. Hence, a close investigation was made on this part of the policy. As a result, some phrases/statements that are related to society and societal problems were identified. These phrases/statements are listed as follows.

- Education enables individuals and *society to make all-rounded participation...* (p. 1),
- One of the aims of education is to strengthen the individual's and *society's problem-solving capacity, ...* (p. 1),
- Education also plays a role in the promotion of *respect for human rights* and *democratic values*, creating the condition for *equality, mutual understanding, and cooperation* among people Education (pp. 1-2),
- ...practice and development to contribute towards an *all rounded development of society* (p.2), and
- ... illiteracy is an overall *problem of the society* (p. 3).

As it can be seen from the above list, in the introductory part of the ETP about five phrases or statements that are related to society and societal problems are explored. Ideas such as strengthening societal problem-solving capacity through education, education for all rounded development of society, and taking into consideration of societal problems while deciding educational aims are ideas that are consistent with the social Reconstructionist educational philosophy. The role of education in establishing a society that is based on equality, democracy, respect, and mutual understanding is also an important educational issue for social reconstructionist educators. The presence of these phrases and statements shows that

some ideas of the social reconstructionist educational philosophy were not totally ignored in the introductory part of the ETP.

The objective part of the Ethiopian ETP

An attempt was also made to examine the second (objective) part of this national policy document for its incorporation of some phrases/statements that connotes social reconstructionist ideas. In this regard, the following phrases/statements were identified.

- Bring up citizens who respect *human rights*, stand for the *well-being of people*, as well as for *equality, justice, and peace*, endowed with *democratic culture* and *discipline* (p.7),
- ... relating education to *environment and societal needs* (p. 8),
- To provide education that promotes... and that raises the sense of discharging *societal responsibility* (p. 10), and
- To gear education towards reorienting *society's attitude* and value ... (p. 11).

All of the four phrases/statements indicated above imply that some society-centered educational objectives are included in the policy document. For instance, the first statement on the list above indicates that the establishment of a social system in which citizens entertain issues such as human and democratic rights, equality, justice, peace, democracy, and social well-being are among the objectives of education and training in Ethiopia. The second phrase also implies the need to relate the country's education with environmental problems and societal needs. In the remaining two statements too phrases implying education's role in raising students' social responsibilities and making them aware of their societal values are included. This finding, therefore, implies that society and societal issues are not totally given a deaf ear in the objective part of the country's ETP.

The strategy part of the Ethiopian ETP

The third major part of the policy document is concerned with the general strategies that are believed to be instrumental in realizing the objectives of the ETP. In this regard, nine general educational strategies and directions are presented. As shown hereunder, some concepts related to society are found in this part of the policy document.

- Ensure that the curriculum developed and textbooks prepared...giving due *attention to concrete local conditions* (p. 12),
- ... appropriate relationships among the various levels of education, training, research, development and *societal needs*, (p. 13),
- ... enabling students become problem-solving professional leaders in their fields of study and *in overall societal needs* (p. 15),
- *Research of practical societal impact* will be given priority... (p. 27),
- Due attention will be given to *popular participation*, ... (p. 28), and
- ... with an overall coordination and democratic *leadership by boards or committees, consisting of members from the community (society)*, ... (p. 30).

As it can be seen from the above list, six of the educational strategies have embodied words, phrases, or statements that reflect society and societal issues. For instance, the first and second phrases imply that curriculum, the first important educational strategy in the policy document, should be based on local conditions and societal needs. The third phrase also suggests the need to make students problem solvers, including social problems. The last three phrases from the above list also imply the need to integrate research with social benefit and the need to enhance popular/community participation in the organization and management of educational institutions.

DISCUSSIONS

As the findings of the present study revealed, many societal issues, particularly those that are given much attention in the social reconstructionist educational philosophy, were given little attention in the ETP of Ethiopia. For instance, major concepts related to society in general and the Ethiopian society, in particular, received a miniature inclusion in the policy document. Besides, the policy document was found to be less-sensitive in incorporating major societal problems, both local and global. Findings of the study also uncovered that the country's education, at a policy level, has not focused on issues related to society and social reconstruction. In the ETP of Ethiopia, concepts related to democracy and social justices were also found to be marginalized. In the study, as already indicated, only some implicitly addressed concepts were explored. Overall, many words, phrases, or statements that explicitly reflect society, societal issues, and society-centered educational views received scant incorporation in the ETP document of Ethiopia.

The findings of the present study are found to be consistent with some local studies that were directly or indirectly conducted on the Ethiopian societies (e.g., Damtew, 2008). In that study, the researcher explored that current social, economic, and environmental problems of Ethiopia were not adequately considered in the country's curriculum materials.

The present finding is also in line with some of the ideas of Tekeste (2006). Professor Tekeste, one of the well-known analysts of the Ethiopian education system, consistently reported that the current education system of the country is unrealistic and inappropriate to meet national demands. This scholar, in one of his remarkable books, indicated that "... the role of education in the alleviation of poverty has not been significant at all. And part of the reason, is that Ethiopian Education has been based on false premises" (Tekeste, 2006, p. 46). One of the issues that Tekeste reverberated is the fact that the formal education system that the country has been following is by far unconnected to the needs and demands of the rural population. Due to this, he generalized that the rural population of the country (85%) had no respect for this type of education.

Another local research finding that is relevant to the topic under discussion is the one that was reported by Amare (2009). Professor Amare, one of the distinguished Ethiopian educationalists at Addis Ababa University, had conducted a case study that aimed at investigating the place of the four goals of education advocated by the UNESCO. In that study, the researcher explored that both the curriculum and the teaching-learning process, in

the study area (Tigray region), were in line with *the knowledge acquisition* educational paradigm. In his study, Amare concluded that the education of Tigray, both its pedagogy and administration, was characterized by “a predominantly narrow purposes of education, *knowledge acquisition*, or what the UNESCO calls “*learning to know*”, to the detriment of other useful purposes, *learning to do*, *learning to be* and *learning to live together*” (Amare, 2009, p. 411).

The findings of the present study are also consistent with the ideas of many prominent scholars. For many educators, the society-centered educational ideas that are advocated by social reconstructionism have been marginalized in the education system of many countries. For instance, Stanley (1992) asserted that compared to other educational philosophies, social reconstructionism has been neglected in many countries. Surprisingly, one may not find the philosophy in some popular western books that deal with educational philosophy. A good example in this regard is the book written by Ornstein and Levine (2008). In their work *Foundations of education*, these authors omitted social reconstructionism while discussing the major educational philosophies.

One important thing that needs to be discussed at this juncture is the reasons that might attribute to the problem under consideration. Though further studies could be necessary, however, it is not impossible to make a reflection, based on the existing literature, personal experience, and observations, on some of the possible factors that might contribute to the problem.

One of the possible reasons for the insensitivity of the Ethiopian ETP to society and societal problems could be related with the invisibility of the social reconstructionist educational philosophy in various educational discourses. As indicated by many writers (e.g., Stanley, 1992; Hill, 2006), compared to other educational philosophies, social reconstructionism is a young philosophy so that it has not been in a position to entertain wide recognition. The emergence of related educational theories (e.g., critical theory, education for social justice, education for democratic citizenship) has also contributed important roles in obscuring Social Reconstructionism (Orenstein & Hunkins, 2004). Most importantly, the general skepticism and uncertainty that developed towards the philosophy, as of its inception, have resulted in making many educators, including educational policy formulators, to be less-sensitive on this educational philosophy.

The predominance of educational progressivism in the education system of many contemporary countries, including in the education system of Ethiopia, could also be the second possible reason for the problem under discussion. Educational progressivism, that strives to inculcate major ideas of liberal democracy, has been able to get state support since its foundation in the late 19th century (Brameld, 1971; Hill, 2006; Reese, 2001). Its emphasis on the idea of individual freedom, democratic teaching, and its resistance against teacher domination, subject-centered curricula, and child punishment had enabled the philosophy to have wide universal acceptance. Due to this, many contemporary educational systems give due emphasis for this educational philosophy while making diverse educational decisions, including decisions of national education policies (Hill, 2006; Reese, 2007). Ethiopia, as one

of the least developed sub-Saharan countries, had no chance to escape from the influence of this western-originated philosophy, as it is highly dependent on the western world and its international organizations like the World Bank and the IMF.

The introduction of major neo-liberal ideas in the education system of Ethiopia, like many other countries in the world, could also be another possible reason for the problem under consideration. As Maguire and Dillon (2007) have indicated the following four key neo-liberal ideas have been exerting a formidable influence on national education and training policies: Marketization, managerialism, standards, and privatization. Since these ideas are centered on individualism, their place for society and societal problems is too minimal. Hence the rapid inclusion of neo-liberal ideas in many contemporary educational policies, including the Ethiopian one, could have contributed to the inadequate incorporation of many society-related educational ideas.

In Ethiopia, lack of experience in educational policy formulation seems another reason for the insensitivity of the country's ETP for society and societal problems. In the country, the education sector, like other sectors, has no national institute responsible for the formulation of national educational policy. Generally, educational policy formulation in Ethiopia is considered to be the responsibility of those who held political power. Hence, involving experienced and knowledgeable professionals at the time of policy formulation is not a developed tradition in the nation. Usually, it is through government-appointed national task forces and ad hoc committee members, comprising non-educationalists and politicians that the task of policy formulation is undertaken. For instance, the 1994 ETP was formulated by a national task force under the chairmanship and direct control of a politician from the prime minister office. As Solomon (2008) has clearly explained, this task force did not make an adequate preliminary situational analysis on the country's education while formulating this national policy document. Due to this, as this educationalist had reported, the task force seemed to have duplicated many of the directions and provisions of a previous national education policy document (Education Sector Review-ESR) which was formulated in 1972 by the government of Haile Selassie I (1930-1974), more than 40 years ago.

The fifth reason, which is related to the one discussed above, might be an absence of the culture of regular policy update. As indicated earlier, the current ETP of Ethiopia was formulated in 1994, i.e., 24 years ago. Formally, a single sentence of the policy has not been changed since its promulgation. Put differently, though many sensitive changes have taken place, both nationally and internationally, this policy document has still remained reflecting the social, economic, political, and educational realities of the early 1990s.

Finally, the national political landscape in contemporary Ethiopia seems to be one reason for the inadequate incorporation of many sensitive educational ideas advocated by social reconstructionism. As many scholars (e.g., Brameld, 1971; Apple, 1990; Hill, 2006; Stanley, 2011) contend, an enabling political atmosphere that wholeheartedly encourages the major ideas of democracy, equality, social justice, and other related values is mandatory for the implementation of social reconstructionist educational thoughts. However, as many studies and social activists frequently reported, the political landscape of Ethiopia, like many African

countries, does not seem appropriate for the realization of this educational philosophy. For many, the country's politics is smart at a rhetoric level. However, the effort to establish a better socio-economic and political order that equally and equitably benefit all societal members, through education, seems too minimal.

CONCLUSIONS

As already indicated, the present study confirmed that the Ethiopian ETP is insensitive for basic social reconstructionist educational thoughts. For instance, findings from manifest content analysis witnessed that the policy did not adequately incorporate words, phrases, and concepts that are central in the social reconstructionist educational philosophy. In this regard, concepts related to society in general and those to the Ethiopian societies, in particular, received little attention. Similarly, society-centered educational purposes did not get an adequate place. The policy document was also found to be empty of words and phrases related to democracy and social justice. The same is true for global issues and specific societal problems that characterize the developing world. It was only through the latent content analysis that some elements of social reconstructionism were observed. However, these contents were treated implicitly and compared to the entire contents of the document they are too negligible.

Therefore, the overall findings of the study revealed that many societal issues and society-centered educational views were not adequately incorporated. The findings of the study also confirmed the insensitivity of the ETP for many societal issues that need to be reflected. This was particularly important on major concepts related to society in general and the Ethiopian society in particular, national/local problems, globalization, and global problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above-mentioned conclusions imply that much effort needs to be exerted by different bodies so as to make education in Ethiopia a catalyst for social reconstruction. The researchers believe that this could be possible if the following issues are properly addressed.

First, a national philosophy of education that guides the entire educational process of the country, from policy formulation to curriculum implementation at classrooms levels, need to be stated and articulated. This is because, as reported by some Ethiopian educators (e.g., Amare, 2009), the educational philosophy that the country has been following was not clearly and explicitly stated. Of course, naïve observation of the country's ETP may lead someone to generalize that educational progressivism (student-centered educational approach) is the predominant educational philosophy. However, one cannot consistently find this educational philosophy in various educational issues of the country. Particularly, at the classroom level, it is either perennialism or essentialism that dominates different instructional activities. It seems due to this fact that the education system in the country, as convincingly explained by Amare (2009), is suffering from the course coverage and knowledge mastery educational syndromes. Hence, the Ethiopian ministry of education, by considering diverse societal and global issues, needs to rethink the country's educational philosophy. In doing so, the relevance of social reconstructionism in nation-building needs to be reconsidered.

The second important thing that could be implied from this study is the need for regular policy updating. Since the time we are living is characterized by rapid and dynamic changes, checking the compatibility of policy documents with these changes is of paramount significance. Therefore, the government of Ethiopia in general and its ministry of education, in particular, need to give due attention to this issue.

Above all, making the task of education policy formulation a professional responsibility should be emphasized. In this regard, the establishment of research centers/institutes that are responsible for diverse tasks related to educational policy formulation, with appropriate professionals, needs to be considered as one decisive step. In a related manner, conducting a national assessment on various national and global societal problems needs to be given attention. Making deliberations on global educational trends and learning from the experience of others should also be given much consideration by all stakeholders of the Ethiopian education system.

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